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754 who are professional sorcerers, working evil repeatedly for the pleasure they derive from it. Such persons are called *mpamosavy* and are universally feared and hated, although the practice of occasional [177] sorcery is condoned. Apparently *mpamosavy* have become much more numerous since the Imerina conquered the Tanala and many informants denied that they existed prior to the conquest. There may be some truth in this, for stories told of their antics are very much like those told by the Imerina about their own sorcerers.

The *mpamosavy*, who may be either men or women, are not content to injure their enemies by charms. They steal out of their houses at night, nude except for a white *lamba* which is wrapped around the head like a turban. They go to tombs, especially shortly after a burial, and dance there, rejoicing. This strengthens the influences which have caused the death and brings about the deaths of others. They rob tombs, carrying off valuables deposited with the dead and taking bones and parts of bodies, which are used to concoct evil charms. During my stay an *mpamosavy* stole a skull from a tomb and placed it in the middle of the village square, where it was found next day. The natives were less terrified than one might have expected and one of the men whose duty it was to shift old bodies at a burial gathered it up without ceremony, wrapped it in a *lamba* and took it back. There were no ceremonies for purification or to avert evil and within a week the incident seemed to have been forgotten.

When anyone in the village is ill, the *mpamosavy* will come and cry outside the house at night, mourning as if he were already dead. This strengthens the evil influences and makes the person die. They also scratch at doors and windows, terrifying persons in the house and acting as though they wished to break in, although they never enter. Sometimes they ride cattle until the cattle are exhausted, break down fences and do other wanton damage. Although they are greatly feared, they have no power to injure a person who confronts them boldly and several informants expressed a wish to encounter one. The reason for this was that, as the punishment for [683] the crime was death, if one captured an *mpamosavy* one could demand a huge sum for releasing him and concealing his identity.

754 928 Tanala *mpamosavy* apparently are solitary, not operating in organized groups like those of the Imerina. Several informants expressed the belief that a person might be an *mpamosavy* without knowing it himself, citing instances. Such a person would be forced to become one by the power of some evil charm. There seemed to

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be no idea of spirit possession. The unconscious *mpamosavy* would go to bed like anyone else, then rise and do his evil deeds and night running in a somnambulistic condition. One man did not know that he was an *mpamosavy* until his wife told him that he rose every night after they had gone to bed, went out, and returned some hours later with his body icy cold and his feet covered with dew. A similar case among the Betsileo seemed well authenticated. The child of a wealthy Christian family had died and been buried in the cemetery. It was found that some one came at night and trampled on the grave, tore up flowers that had been placed on it, etc. A watch was set and it was found that the offender was a female servant of the family. She had been the child's nurse and her devotion to it was unquestionable. She was overwhelmed with grief when she found what she had done, and all those who knew her were convinced that her acts had been unconscious. With such instances in mind it is not hard to understand why persons accused of being *mpamosavy* often doubt their own innocence, or why even the victims of trial by ordeal believe in its efficacy.

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FADY

The term *fady* is equivalent to the Polynesian taboo. It means a prohibition of any sort and, by an extension of the idea, the act or thing prohibited. The term is applied equally to acts which are simple breaches of good manners, punished only by popular disapprobation, and to those which are offensive to the ancestors and bring supernatural punishment. There are hundreds of *fady* and no one person is familiar with the entire series. In general, a few of the most important are known and obeyed, while the rest are known only to the *ombiasy* and afford them an unfailing supply of reasons for illness and misfortune.

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Tanala *fady* may be roughly classified as general *fady*, observed by the entire tribe, *fady* of the gens and village, and individual *fady*. The latter are nearly always associated with charms and have been described under that heading. Many of the general fady are associated with ideas of sympathetic magic. Thus it is *fady* to bring a flaming brand into the house, as this will bring in danger. It is also *fady* to carry a burden across the village square if it is slung on a pole between two men. This is because corpses are carried in this way and if one does it there will soon be a death. There are no doubt other *fady* of similar import. There are also a number of general *fady* on foods. Dogs, rats, snakes and crocodiles are never

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787 If a hen lays a very small egg, or eats its eggs, or crows, it is a
825 sign of danger, sickness or death in the family.

After the *kovovy* ("guard an charm") was set up at Ambohimanga, if a single crow flew over the village it was a sign that enemy scouts were near. If there were two or more crows, the enemy was at a distance and would not arrive. If a wild boar or lemur came to the village of its own accord, it was a sign of great and imminent danger. This only happened once, in the time of Queen Iovana, and an ox was sacrificed to the ancestors at once to avert the evil.

DREAMS

787 The significance attached to dreams of ancestors has already been discussed. Other dreams were interpreted as actual experiences of the *ambiroa* and were not considered ominous. I could learn of no instances of dream interpretation.

INSANITY AND SPIRIT POSSESSION

828 There is a very sharp distinction in the native mind between
158 spirit possession and insanity. The latter is believed to be due to the absence of the normal personality, equated with the soul. Although the insane are usually well treated, they receive no special respect and are not thought to be under spirit protection. Formerly those who were violent or otherwise troublesome, or who appeared to be suffering, were put to death as painlessly as possible. This was considered a merciful act. At the present time even the more conservative tribes usually send their insane to be cared for by the government.

787 All the Malagasy believe in spirit possession, but its importance
158 in the culture pattern varies considerably with the tribe. The idea appears to be most developed among the Sakalava, on the west coast, moderately strong among the plateau tribes, and weak among those of the southeast coast. The Antaifasina, who belong to the last-named group, insisted that they were unfamiliar with it prior to about 1910, when it was introduced by tribesmen who had worked on west coast plantations. Some of these men became possessed by Sakalava spirits, who returned with them. Even now, many of the Antaifasina claim to be possessed by the souls of Sakalava chiefs and speak Sakalava during their seizures. In view of the unquestionable antiquity of spirit possession among the other east coast tribes, it seems probable that the idea was already present, but received a great impetus from the Sakalava contact. It could not have been

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very strong, however, for the Antaifasina say that they are unable to cure the malady and are accustomed to turn over the victims to the French medical authorities for treatment.

The ceremonial side of spirit possession is most highly developed among those tribes which show the most African influence and it seems possible that the whole idea is ultimately traceable to Africa. However, it has become thoroughly incorporated into the native culture. I never heard a non-Christian native express scepticism regarding it and even the Christians are convinced of its reality and treat it by prayer and exorcism.

Spirit possession is always intermittent. Physically it is characterized by trembling and twitching, increasing in violence until the subject begins to dance. The attack usually ends in unconsciousness and rigidity. When the subject is revived he is normal and has no memory of what has occurred. A few of the victims may be true epileptics, but in most cases they seem to suffer from nothing more than acute hysteria. A Tanala woman of the Manandriana gens told me that she might become possessed at any time or place. Her heart would begin to beat violently and everything before her eyes would become wavering and indistinct "as though she were looking through heat waves in strong sunlight." When this happened she knew that the possessing spirit was coming and would begin to dance. She had never seen or heard the spirit and this was the only way in which she was conscious of its presence. Ratzakoba, a Tanala informant of the Zafindiamanana gens, told me that a person subject to possession would begin to tremble and twitch when he heard a drum, or a person crying, or when he felt any strong emotion, as joy at the return of a long-absent relative. All informants agreed that the malady was contagious and that if one person became possessed all those present who were subject to possession would also be attacked. I witnessed a case of this sort during a ceremony at the royal Sakalava tombs at the village of Mahabo. A woman became possessed and a man near her was seized almost immediately. As he was a person of importance all attention was centered on him and the woman recovered in a few minutes without help. Among the Imerina there was a great epidemic of possession in 1863–64, which seems to have been quite comparable to some episodes in medieval European history.

Satisfactory accounts of spirit possession and the methods for its cure were obtained from the Zafindiamanana and Manandriana gentes of the Tanala Menabe. It is known to occur with at least equal frequency among the Ikongo, but no exact information was

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828 158 available. It seems to play a relatively unimportant role in the culture of the Menabe and the native attitude toward it is much the same as that toward any other disease. Although the possessed receive much care and attention during the seizure, to be subject to [554] possession decreases rather than increases the prestige of the individual. Even persons who give oracles while possessed are, with few exceptions, rated below the regular *ombiasy* ("medicine-men"). All informants agreed that a person who was not subject to possession would make no attempt to become so.

178 158 There can be little doubt that spirit possession is becoming more frequent at the present time. This is probably due in part to increased contact with tribes who hold the concept. Thus Raindranaivo, my best informant from the Manandriana gens, says that the ceremonial features of possession have been taken over by his gens from the Betsileo, some of whom now live among them, and that the frequency of possession has greatly increased within his adult memory, about fifty years. Emotional stresses resulting from the break-up of the old culture may also play a part, for the epidemic outbreaks of possession among the Imerina occurred at the time when European culture began to make itself felt as a menace.

158 787 In both gentes the term *salamanga* is applied indiscriminately to the malady, the spirit causing it, the person suffering from it (during the time he is possessed), and the ceremony for its cure. The Zafindiamanana recognize two types of *salamanga*, the ordinary one and the *salamanga sakalava*, in which the possessed gives spirit messages, directions for making medicines, etc., during the seizure.

There seems to be a good deal of confusion about the spirits causing the ordinary *salamanga*. In general they are regarded as ancestral, but there seems to be no complete agreement on this, or as to whether more than one spirit can possess the same individual at different times. The ordinary *salamanga* usually does not know who his possessing spirit is. He is seized without warning and will drop whatever he is doing and run toward the village tomb or to some near-by lake or river, where he plunges in. His relatives pursue him and carry him back to the village bodily. Once there, he is released and begins to dance. If the bystanders do not sing and clap, to help him, he falls unconscious and becomes rigid, as though dead. After the victim has danced for a time and begins to show signs of exhaustion, one of his relatives takes the *hazomanga* (see p. 187), scrapes it with the regular invocation, and puts the dust in water. The victim drinks some of this and pours the rest over his head. He recove

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at once. The Zafindiamanana have no charms to prevent possession and say that no permanent cure is possible. 158 787

The *salamanga sakalava* is always possessed by a known ancestral spirit. In many cases he is a regular practitioner who can throw himself into the *salamanga* state at will. The Zafindiamanana seem to use the terms *salamanga sakalava* and *ombiasy ndolo* as synonymous, although in other gentes the latter term has a different significance (see *Ombiasy*). However, they rate such persons below the regular *ombiasy* and say that the profession is dangerous, often leading to insanity. 756 829

The *salamanga sakalava* seems to occupy himself mainly with curing diseases. The situation is explained to him before the seizure comes on. During the attack he behaves like the ordinary *salamanga*, but if he runs to water at the onset of the possession he will dive to the bottom and bring up something from it. This will be the medicine for the malady. After he has been brought back, and while he is dancing, his spirit will answer questions or declare the cause and cure of the sickness. Finally, he is cured with *hazomanga* water, like the regular *salamanga*. 756

Among the Manandriana the ideas and practices connected with the *salamanga* are much more elaborate. They call the ordinary *salamanga* (without messages) *bilo*. It manifests itself by violent twitchings and a compulsion to dance. It may attack people while they are asleep or seriously ill in bed. It may also be brought on by eating the first of the new rice or maize at harvest time. Sometimes, apparently, the *ombiasy* diagnoses an illness as *bilo* when the ordinary symptoms are lacking. When the attack commences the *ombiasy* ("medicine-man") employs the *sikidy* ("divination") to discover what sort it is. There are three varieties, *andiha*, *andamalama* and *evobola*, which are the same in symptoms but differ in treatment. Apparently the real difference lies in the strength and obstinacy of the possessing spirit, but Raindranaivo remarked cynically that rich people were usually possessed by the *andiha*, which required the longest and most expensive ceremony. 753 755

The cure of *salamanga andiha* is as follows: A bed in the form of a stretcher is hung from the roof of the house in such a position that its edge will be against the north side of the center post and its head east. Directly over the ordinary fireplace another fireplace is made. This is a platform raised on four posts about 2 feet high and covered with a mat. On the mat is a square enclosure of boards full of earth in which stone tripods for two pots are planted. One tripod 755

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755 787 The *salamanga menabe* is a form of possession by an ancestral spirit. The spirit speaks through the person possessed and prophesies coming misfortunes to the entire group such as pestilence, floods or the attack of an enemy. The *menabe* carries a staff with which he points out where bad *ody* ("charms") are hidden. During the seizure he is "like an *ombiasy*" ("medicine-man") but the state cannot be induced and he is not consulted regularly. A peculiarity of this form is that no one may wear a hat while the *menabe* is dancing. If he sees a person wearing one he tries to take it off and, failing in this, falls unconscious. He is revived by drinking and being asperged with water containing medicine.

158 828 The *salamanga sakalava* is rare and occurs only in the north. It is also due to possession by an ancestral spirit, but the possessed does not prophesy. The movements are the most violent of all and the victim vomits blood. This is caught and carefully kept, for if any of it falls on the ground the victim will die at once. Informants did not know the method of cure for this variety.

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524 Tanala toys seem to be characterized by an almost complete absence of replicas of things used by adults. I never saw any small figures of cattle or chickens, although such playthings are very common among the plateau tribes, or any miniature tools or utensils. The girls did not even have dolls.

At least one form of mechanical puzzle is in use (Fig. 27, b). The object of this puzzle is to transfer the seeds from one-half of the stick to the other without untying the string. I saw several examples of this puzzle, all exactly alike, and informants said it was the only one known to them.

String figures appear to be entirely lacking. I showed several children how to make some of the simpler ones, but the idea seemed to be quite new to them and they soon lost interest. I doubt whether any of the Malagasy made string figures in ancient times. The Imerina seem to be the only tribe familiar with them at present and they have only a few, very simple figures which they could easily have learned from Europeans.

828 524 Boys begin to use the bow and arrow, blow-gun and sling at an early age. The bow remains a toy, used by older boys for hunting small game (Fig. 28, b), but the blow-gun and sling become, for adults, important weapons. Natives of all ages are expert in throwing stones by hand, but they have no ball games and most of them have great difficulty in catching an easily thrown ball. While still very young, boys begin to practice throwing palm ribs and reeds at a mark and the skill thus acquired is very helpful when, as adults, they begin to use the spear. Before the natives were disarmed by the French, men often engaged in spear-throwing contests.

526 Athletic sports are common. The boys of a village will divide into two groups and play at war, one group defending the village and another attacking. Scouts are sent out on both sides and the boys maneuver as in real warfare. This sham fighting is carried on under the direction of old men who prevent real fights and at the same time train the boys in the best way to take cover, advance under fire, etc. Aside from this, there seem to be no sports which require team work.

All the Tanala know how to swim, but it is rarely indulged in as a sport. I never saw them swim, as I was in their territory during the cold season, but was told that they used a crawl stroke. Apparently they do no fancy swimming or diving.

The Tanala Ikongo are fond of wrestling, although it is less important here than among the Bara or Sakalava. The wrestling is of the "catch as catch can" variety and a fall consists in having